

# COMMUNICATION

## Lesson 7

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### Workbook Assignment

*Family Patterns*  
*Dealing With Conflict*

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### Overview

In this lesson students will examine the way their upbringing and family life influence the style of their communication. The lesson will also demonstrate how family patterns of dealing with conflict influence how conflict is handled in other relationships. Students will learn how to replace negative statements with positive communication.

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### Objectives

- ◆ Students will analyze family communication patterns.
  - ◆ Students will identify different communication styles.
  - ◆ Students will examine learned patterns for dealing with conflict.
  - ◆ Students will practice using constructive rather than destructive patterns of communication.
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### Vocabulary

communication  
upbringing  
roadblocks

conflict  
influence  
compromise

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### Key Concepts

- Learned family patterns of communication will influence communication behavior in other relationships.
  - Family styles of communication vary significantly.
  - Different communication styles may or may not be compatible when in relationships.
  - Most conflict in a relationship centers around misunderstanding and miscommunication between the partners.
  - Compromise is an important component in conflict resolution.
  - Changing negative statements into positive ones can reduce the potential for conflict between partners.
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discuss the suggested Guidelines.

- Assign the last two sections (Areas For Improvement and Exploring Further) of the worksheet *Dealing with Conflict* as homework.

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## LECTURE NOTES:

This lesson introduces students to a more in-depth approach to analyzing communication patterns. Students will learn about the research of Hugh Allred and Thomas Graff, termed "Vertical and Horizontal (Level) Communication."

Using the following scenario, explain vertical communication as follows:

Picture two elevators, side by side, in the lobby of a building. A man enters the left elevator and a woman enters the right elevator. Before the doors close the two begin a conversation with each other. They would like to continue the conversation but the elevators consistently stop at different floors. This is an example of vertical communication.

Vertical communication refers to those factors in communication which put two people attempting to communicate on different levels. When we practice vertical communication we draw attention to self, become domineering and bossy, maintain or create distance, and/or surrender. The goals of vertical communication are: Power, Prestige, Position. The focus in vertical communication may be on competition between the partners.

When we practice level communication the goal is to understand, negotiate, encourage, and reveal feelings. Level communication allows one to be open, flexible, honest and genuine. When we communicate on a level, equal plane with another person, it demonstrates that we accept responsibility for our behavior and are sensitive to the other person's feelings. A level communicator observes and shares opinions, understands, negotiates and commits, encourages and discloses feelings openly.

### **Background Threats to Effective Communication:**

Family Climate: The psychological atmosphere in which the child was raised may influence his/her communication behavior in other significant relationships. If a child grows up accustomed to loud and projected arguments as a way of expressing feelings or making decisions, he/she may assume the same behavior in a dating relationship; in contrast, if arguments never occurred in the family or true feelings were usually suppressed to keep the peace, the individual may tend to keep feelings unspoken or avoid resolving disagreements.

Birth or Place Order: The eldest child in a family may be accustomed to dominance over the others, being directive (bossy) and getting his or her way in all things. The first child may not have learned to share or compromise. Only children tend to behave the same as first children. In a relationship comprised of two first children, there may be a struggle for power and control. Only children tend to marry at an earlier age.

Second children may be rebellious and contrary. Two people in a relationship who have occupied this place-order position may find themselves continually in opposition to each other.

Middle children tend to be empathetic and concerned about the needs of others. They probably learned something about negotiation and compromise, and are likely to use these skills in a relationship, especially with another middle child.

Youngest children have less pressure from the parents to grow up quickly. They often have difficulty with responsibility and prefer to have a good time.

Self-Concept: The collection of beliefs and assumptions you have about yourself is another influence on your communication behavior. If you were raised in a family that gave praise and encouragement freely, you will probably feel good about yourself if you have been able to sustain these positive feelings. If competition among family members was intense, you may experience doubts about yourself which you will have to overcome in order to establish open and honest expressions of thought and feelings with another person.

#### Sources of Conflict:

- \* If you believe you must be right, every conflict is unresolved until your partner surrenders.
- \* If you believe you cannot survive rejection, you will strive to please your partner at all costs.
- \* If you believe you must be in control in order to be recognized, you can expect conflict to be part of your relationship.
- \* If you believe you must be perfect, you can expect disappointments because all humans are imperfect.

**Remember:** Negative beliefs and statements can be a major source of conflict in a relationship.

# FAMILY PATTERNS

The way family members communicate with each other has a great influence on how they will interact in relationships outside of the home. It is beneficial to examine the patterns of communication you have learned. Circle the answer that best describes your family style.

## Conversation Survey:

1. How would you describe the communication "condition" at home?  
open communication      closed communication
2. Within your family, how do the members feel toward each other?  
separated      connected
3. The conversations at home tend to center around which topics?  
people      facts      feelings      ideas
4. To whom would you rather talk?  
a parent      a sibling      a relative      a friend      no one
5. How often do your family members get together to talk about concerns?  
daily      several times a week      only when there is a problem      never
6. When does your family spend time together in conversation?  
after school      at mealtime      late evenings      on weekends      never
7. How would you describe your family's ability to handle change?  
go with the flow      very stressful      get angry      resistant
8. Who makes the major decisions in the family?  
father      mother      the children      the grandparents      it varies
9. Are family members free to disagree with one another?  
yes      no
10. How would you describe the overall tone of the conversation style at home?  
talk quietly      shouting      argumentative      critical
11. Are there topics at home that are off limits for discussion?  
yes      no
12. Do family members value each other's opinions?  
yes      no

# DEALING WITH CONFLICT

Most of the problems that occur between people in a relationship center around the inability to communicate in an effective way. Each person may think that his/her method is correct which can lead to serious conflict between them. Some styles of communication are positive while others are negative and tend to add to the problems. Knowing how you and your partner settle differences is an important element in improving understanding.

## TAKE A LOOK:

1. What is your usual pattern of communication for handling conflict?

arguing	silent treatment	physical aggression
leave	alcohol/drugs	talk it out
cry	blame someone else	hold your feelings inside
2. How important is it that you "win" an argument?

very important	moderately important	not important
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3. If you believe there is a problem, what do you do?

confront the issue	ignore the issue	tell an outside party about it
try to solve it alone	wait for my partner to bring it up	
4. In order to end the conflict, what would you do?
  - a) give in even though you believe you are right
  - b) try to convince your partner to see it your way
  - c) wait and bring it up again at another time
5. What do you think?
  - a) if my partner loves me, he/she will agree with me
  - b) we both have to agree on every issue
  - c) it is all right not to agree on everything
  - d) I always let my partner make the final decision
6. Choose any two conflict solving methods from question 1 and explain how problems might occur for a couple when the two methods collide in a relationship. You may also choose other methods that you can think of from your own experience.

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### AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT:

Look at the list of suggestions for resolving conflict. Based on your answers to questions 1-5, find a behavior that you would be able to improve. What changes could you make? Explain.

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### EXPLORING FURTHER:

Communication is much more than just *what* we say, it is also *how* we say something. Tone of voice and facial expression both contribute to the message being sent. Begin paying attention to the remarks you may make or others may make to you. Remember, we are all perceiving *meaning* from what we hear and say. Words can help or damage! It is as easy to say something kind as it is to say something thoughtless. Rewrite the following negative remarks to make them caring and responsible.

1. I told you so.

2. If you really cared I wouldn't have to tell you.

3. Will you ever grow up?

4. You know what I expected.

5. Give me *one* reason why this is so important. (The reason you give will, of course, be wrong).

6. How many times do I have to tell you?

7. Stop that, you don't know what you're doing!

8. How come you can't figure this out on your own?

9. That wasn't the right thing to do, I would have done it differently.

10. Everyone else saw it coming, why didn't you?